

Alabama's First District

# CONGRESSMAN JO BONNER

## THE WASHINGTON REPORT

315 Cannon House Office Building ★ Washington, DC 20515 ★ (202) 225-4931 ★ Summer 2004



Dear Friend,

Twenty months have passed since I first entered the House chamber as your new congressman, and my profound gratitude for being given this opportunity to work for you is just as strong today as it was on day one.

As promised, my staff and I began work immediately — beginning on that first day — to be your voice in Congress and your link to the many agencies of the federal government.

One promise that has been especially rewarding to keep has been our commitment to be as accessible as humanly possible.

From holding 76 town hall meetings since being sworn in to office (with 14 more scheduled this month, see page 3), to a wide array of other communication tools — our weekly television and radio shows, a weekly newspaper column, a monthly electronic newsletter, even this newspaper insert — the feedback we have received from this outreach has been nothing but positive.

Moreover, when combined with the encouraging messages contained in your e-mails, letters, and phone calls (over 1,700 e-mails and letters each week), I am more convinced than ever that the people of South Alabama are utilizing our offices and the many services we provide. There's a sign in our offices in Washington, Mobile, and Baldwin County that summarizes our office philosophy; simply stated, it reads: *This office belongs to the people of South Alabama.*

As Congress breaks for its annual August District Work Period, I hope you will find this update on many of the more timely topics being discussed in Washington — and here in South Alabama — to be of interest. And, as always, whenever we can be of service, remember we are just a toll-free phone call away.

### Remarkable progress in Iraq

Looking back at the birth of our own nation 228 years ago, the amount of change and progress that has occurred in Iraq over the past 16 months is nothing short of amazing.

This change — let me add — would not have

occurred had it not been for the tremendous courage, leadership, and sacrifice of the men and women of our armed forces, many of whom call South Alabama their home.

Over the past couple of years, thousands of families have loaned their sons and daughters,



*Tribute to President Ronald Reagan  
See page 6*



*SSGT Dennis Russell and SFC Clinton Rudolph both soldiers from the Fairhope-based 1165th Military Police Company hang a banner outside the pavilion for a family gathering at the replacement center in Fort Benning, Ga. Monday July 12, 2004 after spending 14 months in Iraq. (Mobile Register, John David Mercer)  
See story on page 6.*

husbands and wives, and mothers and fathers, to serve their country in the global war against terrorism. Their sacrifices should never be taken for granted or forgotten.

## TOWN MEETINGS SET FOR AUGUST

see schedule on page 3

History reminds us that it took 13 years from the writing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 before the formal establishment of our current system of government occurred and George Washington was elected our first president.

Similarly, in recent weeks the world has witnessed the transformation from an Iraq under the rule of a truly evil and ruthless dictator, Saddam Hussein, to an Iraq that today is in its infancy as a free nation.

Not surprisingly, this transfer of power from the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Government to the new Iraqi government has not been without its challenges. Thus far, Iraq's new leaders appear to be taking positive steps forward, albeit small ones, as they combat and deal with the continuing terrorist threats that are a challenge to a free and liberated Iraq.

While some in this country seem almost apologetic for getting rid of Saddam Hussein, as though either Iraq or the world was a safer place when he was in power, the many positive developments in Iraq are often obscured in the national press, if they are reported at all.

Case in point: for weeks on end, Americans were more familiar with the seven soldiers involved with the Abu Ghraib prison scandal than the thousands of soldiers who have received awards and commendations for valor in combat.

As a result of this imbalance in news coverage, stories on everything from the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein and his thugs to the reconstruction process in Iraq have at times been completely overlooked.

Ironically, the frustration with this reporting even extends to the new Iraqi government.

In recent weeks, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Barham Salih, has asked the American press to provide more balanced coverage of events in Iraq so the situation there can be put in proper context.

*See Letter continued on page 2*

(Letter continued from page 1)

As he said, "These (American) soldiers are helping renovate schools and so on, and very, very little of that is reported. We have to be grateful to those young men and women who have come from afar, sacrificing their lives to defend our security and our freedom."

It is important that we should recognize the many positive gains being made in Iraq, both to provide a more complete picture of events in that country, as well as to honor the outstanding men and women of our U.S. Armed Forces for their significant contributions over the past year and a half.

Consider some of the events of the past 16 months within Iraq:

- All 240 hospitals and more than 1200 clinics have been reopened.
- More than five million Iraqi children have been vaccinated through a new program of monthly national immunization days.
- All 22 universities and 43 technical institutions and colleges have been reopened.
- Unlike the past three decades where Iraq was ruled by a single political party, multiple political parties have been established and are taking an active part in the newly-created democratic government in that country.

• Many Iraqi women have received training in the financial, fiscal, utilities, and regulatory sectors, a strong contrast to the long period when women's rights were non-existent.

• More than 500 courts have been established, presided over by 600 judges in a system that acted independently of both the Iraqi Governing Council and the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Clearly, a great deal more work remains to be done in Iraq. However, in the weeks and months ahead, I am hopeful we will witness a new democratic form of government begin to thrive and take charge of its own destiny.

One thing is for sure — if these seeds of peace can take root in Iraq, a country that has known war and misery for decades, just think what a powerful statement this would be to those in other parts of the world who wish us ill and want to destroy our way of life.

#### ***National economy continues strong growth***

During the past eleven months, tremendous progress has been made in turning around our national economy. Consider some of these indicators:

- More than 1.5 million new jobs have been

created since last August. Job gains have been steady for the past ten months.

- The national unemployment rate continues to hold steady at 5.6 percent, a level nearly one full point lower than its peak of 6.3 percent just one year ago. The current unemployment rate is below the averages of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

- Home ownership — what most of us referred to growing up as "the American Dream" — is at the highest rate in American history.

- Since last summer, economic growth in the United States has been at its highest level in two decades. In fact, the 3.9 percent rate of growth during the first quarter of 2004 is higher than the historical average for that same period in previous years.

- The New York stock markets are up 40 percent since their low in mid-2002; during that same period, the NASDAQ has increased almost 70 percent.

Of course this is only a partial list of the positive economic news that continues to come out of Washington. Retail sales levels, inflation rates, manufacturing increases, consumer confidence and new housing construction numbers all point to what is proving to be a remarkable economic turnaround.

While this is obviously welcomed news for the nation, it should come as no surprise that my parochial concern is for these good national trends to spark an improved local economy here at home. And even here, there is reason to be optimistic.

According to Governor Bob Riley, four of Alabama's top five economic development projects are looking at South Alabama as a possible home.

My office has been closely involved in a number of these meetings, and we are keeping our fingers crossed that good news is just around the corner.

In addition, the University of South Alabama recently announced plans that they will soon begin construction on its new Cancer Research Institute. The cancer center has been a very high priority for my predecessor, former Congressman Sonny Callahan, and me. Over the last four years, we have succeeded in obtaining \$12.6 million through the appropriations process for the Institute. In addition to being a comprehensive cancer research, patient care, and education center, it will also bring some 700 good jobs and make a \$1 billion contribution to our local economy over the first 10 years.



*Spec. Matt Caylor, left, gets a hug from American Airline Pilot Capt. Arlie Appler as the troops of the 1165th Military Police Company returned to Lawson Army Air Field at Fort Benning, Ga., Sunday, July 11, 2004. Appler held onto one of Caylor's dog tags when the pilot flew the unit over to the Middle East in May of 2003. Capt. Appler flew in to return the dog tag and present him with his first pilot's wings as a token of the bond the two shared. (Mobile Register, John David Mercer)*

Finally, as someone who grew up in the small South Alabama town of Camden, my office and I have made it a top priority to not forget about our smaller towns and communities located throughout the six counties of the First Congressional District.

By working closely with local leaders, our office is taking the initiative to build a regional approach to economic development, getting communities that are traditional rivals on the football field on Friday nights in the fall to sit down at the same table, pool their resources together, and work in concert with one another.

Just like planting a pine seedling, this esprit de corps alone won't guarantee an immediate return on our investment. But if, over the course of time, communities and counties start working more closely together — without regard to city limits or county lines — just imagine how much stronger our area will be when we recruit new business and industry.

My staff and I work for you and your family; I hope you won't hesitate to call on us if you ever need our assistance. Hope our paths cross soon, perhaps at one of our upcoming town meetings.

*Jo Bowmer*



## BONNER INVITES INTERIOR OFFICIAL TO SPEAK AT BIRDFEST

Mark your calendars for the first Coastal Alabama Bird Festival, October 14-17, 2004!

This event, sponsored by numerous local, state, and federal agencies, as well as several private corporations and foundations, is intended to become an annual festival in South Alabama.

We are pleased to announce that U.S. Department of Interior Deputy Secretary Steve Griles



has accepted an invitation to attend the kick-off dinner on Thursday, October 14.

The BirdFest includes guided birding trips, great Southern hospitality, afternoon seminars, children's activities, educational exhibits, evening keynote lectures, and a few workshops.

For more information on this event, please visit my website at

<http://bonner.house.gov>.

## Survivor Benefit Plan and Concurrent Receipt Update

With so many "future veterans" serving their country right now, Congress has devoted a great deal of attention in recent months to two issues of importance to our veterans. Listed below is a brief update on survivor benefits and concurrent receipt:

The Military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) was created in 1972, replacing the Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan (RSFPP).

RSFPP was not popular with eligible military retirees, never exceeding 15 percent participation by those eligible. SBP was created as a significant improvement to RSFPP.

The Survivor Benefit Plan was established so that when a retired service member dies and his military pay stops, his widow (or other eligible recipient) will receive at least 55 percent of the service member's retirement pay on which to live. A premium to cover part of the cost of this protection is deducted from a service member's monthly retirement pay after he retires.

According to the Department of Defense, the original intended purpose of SBP was to "insure that the surviving dependents of military personnel who die in retirement or after becoming eligible for retirement will continue to have a reasonable level of income."

However, the 1972 legislation had one significant problem. It established that eligible recipients would only receive the full 55 percent of retirement pay before they reach age 62. After the age of 62, these payments would be reduced to 35 percent. This reduction is commonly referred to as the Social Security Offset.

As the years progressed, more and more members of Congress realized this "widow's tax" was an injustice to military widows. It had taken 32 years to get to this point, but Congress recently took significant legislative action.

On May 20, 2004, the House of Representatives passed the Fiscal Year 2005 Department of Defense Authorization Act with my strong support. Included in this bill, thankfully, was language authorizing the

increase of survivor benefits for surviving spouses at the age of 62 from the current level of 35 to 55 percent.

As a strong supporter of correcting this 32-year-old penalty against survivor spouses, I was quite pleased to see this provision included, and I am hopeful this language will be included in the final version of the defense authorization bill presented to President Bush for his signature.

Another issue which has gotten a lot of attention in recent months is the matter of concurrent receipt.

Unlike spousal benefits, which traces its roots back to the 1970s, concurrent receipt has been around much longer, dating back to 1891.

Essentially, concurrent receipt established a discrepancy between what a recipient of both military retired pay and disability compensation receives. For many years, Congress has attempted to find a solution to correct this problem; the challenge was always how to pay for the fix.

I am pleased to report that the Fiscal Year 2004 Defense Authorization Act contained language authorizing 20-year military retirees rated at 50 percent and higher to receive both their disability and retirement pay. This is in addition to the Purple Heart Plus provision which authorizes military retirees rated at 10 percent or greater disabled, and having obtained a Purple Heart for which they received their disability, to receive both their disability and retirement pay.

Not surprisingly, the Disabled American Veterans and other national groups hailed this change as a positive step forward. I agree with that sentiment and look forward to continuing the assistance for those who have fought so bravely — and sacrificed so much — for our nation and for our freedoms.

Throughout my first term in Congress, I have worked extremely hard for those who have kept the torch of freedom burning brightly. Their sacrifices have been real, and their love of country is inspirational. This is a fight we will continue to wage for our veterans of today and tomorrow.

## Town Meetings set for August

One of the most enjoyable aspects of being a member of Congress is the opportunity to serve the people you've been elected to represent. Part of this service comes in considering and voting on legislation pending before Congress.

But another important element of what I view as effective representation is visiting with my constituents. One of the ways I do this is through town hall meetings, and we've held 76 since I was first sworn in as a member of Congress just twenty months ago.

For the month of August, we've added 14 more town meetings to our schedule. Please look over the list below and find a time and location that is most convenient for your schedule.

Typically, there are any number of important issues being considered by Congress, and these meetings are a good way for you to come out and let me know your views. I hope to see you later this month.

### Wednesday, August 25

**8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - Dauphin Island**

Town Hall

**10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Eight Mile**

Indian Springs Baptist Church Fellowship Hall

**11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. - Satsuma**

City Hall

**1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Bucks**

White House Family Restaurant

**3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Wagarville**

Wagarville Nutrition Center

**4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - Grove Hill**

Town Hall

### Thursday, August 26

**7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. - Peterman**

Peterman Baptist Church Fellowship Hall

**9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. - Uriah**

Country Kitchen, Highway 21

**11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - Canoe**

Canoe Civic Club

**3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. - East Brewton**

City Hall

### Friday, August 27

**8:15 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. - Josephine**

Volunteer Fire Department

**10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Bon Secour**

Volunteer Fire Department

**2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Point Clear**

St. Francis at the Point Episcopal Church

**4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. - Stapleton**

Volunteer Fire Department

# Clearing the air on LNG

The siting of liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities in Mobile County has dominated the local news in recent months.

However, LNG is just one of many fuel sources we will have to consider when coming up with a long-term solution to the national energy crisis we will face in the not-too-distant future.

In recent years, America has been confronted with a growing number of difficulties in providing adequate energy supplies to meet our growing demand. And as the largest consumer of energy in the world, this problem will only continue to get worse if something isn't done to change course. Unfortunately, many of the warning signs of larger problems on the horizon have simply been ignored, as though pretending they weren't there would make the problems go away.

The rolling blackouts in California in recent years are a good example; officials in that state were aware of the difficulties posed by their overextension of electrical resources but did nothing to alleviate the strain on the system. As a result, supply could not keep up with demand, and the rolling blackouts — a major inconvenience to people throughout the state — were initiated to prevent a complete shutdown of the state's entire power grid.

More recently, the price of gasoline in South Alabama — and throughout the rest of the country — has exceeded \$2 per gallon. While prices have started to fall in recent days — and with it the outrage felt by millions of Americans over the prices they were paying at the pump — once again, the problem hasn't been solved; it has simply improved somewhat for the time being.

Some would contend that the problem is not as severe as we are led to believe and that the current supply of fuel is sufficient.

To counter that, consider this simple fact: since 1979, 750 million cars and trucks have been built and driven out onto America's highways. During that same period, we have watched the number of active refineries — which refine crude oil into gasoline — drop from 321 in 1981 to a present number of only 149. In 2004, domestic production of crude oil has averaged 5.6 million barrels per day. Consumption of refined crude oil products during this period is 20.4 million barrels a day, statistics that graphically illustrate our dependence on foreign oil.

In the natural gas market, we presently import roughly 2 percent of our needs in the form of LNG. This percentage is projected to increase to 25 percent by 2020, and delays in preparing for this fuel could cost our economy many billions of dollars.

Friends, we simply cannot continue at our current pace of consumption if we do not have the resources to fuel them — or the commitment to develop new energy sources to make up for the shortfall.

As is so often the case, the easy thing to do is to sim-

ply talk about the problem. The more difficult challenge, however, is to come up with realistic and viable solutions — ones upon which industry, consumers and the environmental community can all agree — to meet what is rapidly becoming a diminishing supply of fossil fuels.

One thing is for certain; virtually all options for new energy sources will be controversial. And regardless of

***It is unfortunate these responsible attempts to understand all of the consequences of an LNG terminal have been misunderstood and even distorted.***

whether it is an LNG facility in Mobile, a new refinery somewhere else in the United States, drilling in the north slope of Alaska, or the licensing of a new nuclear plant, actions must be taken to adequately address the growing energy problem in this country.

The time ahead will not be easy for this country, and we will be forced to make some hard choices on the path we ultimately take. I have said — and will continue to emphasize in the coming months — that we must find ways of keeping up with our ever-increasing fuel demands in this country. And we must do it as safely and cleanly as possible for everyone who will be impacted, whether it is through their direct use of the new fuel sources or as a result of their proximity to the production facilities.

Here at home, Alabama has not shied away from the production of oil and natural gas, even though those activities have been controversial at times. And it should be noted that we have received a considerable economic boost from oil and gas production — over \$2 billion in the sale of drilling rights and royalties have been paid to the state since leases were first let in Mobile Bay some two decades ago.

When news first broke last year that the Alabama State Port Authority had voted to sell ExxonMobil the old Navy Home Port for the possible location of an LNG terminal, I believed that LNG had the potential to be a good economic investment for South Alabama.

Simply put, we've lost way too many jobs here in South Alabama over the past decade, and one of my highest priorities has been — and will remain — the eco-

nomics development of our region of the state.

As such, I felt it was only right to give all such prospects strong consideration before rushing to judgment. Similarly, I believe it is important that we give any company proposing to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in our community — and create new jobs — an opportunity to explain the benefits they feel they would provide.

Consideration should be given to the economic impact, the number of short- and long-term job opportunities, and the overall role they can play in the life of our community.

In the specific case of LNG, it was important to me to make safety our highest priority. Since November 2003, I have organized or participated in three well-attended public meetings related to the permitting and safety of these facilities. Early that month, I attended a community meeting on Hollinger's Island at which residents and business owners raised numerous issues regarding the impact an LNG plant would have on their lives and the safety of their community.

Later that month, representatives from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission came to Mobile — at my insistence — to give an overview of the permitting process and answer numerous questions from those in attendance. And earlier this year, experts from the United States Coast Guard accepted my invitation to come to Mobile to hold a public meeting to focus on the safety of LNG vessels and the precautions taken to ensure their safe transport and offloading of cargo. With many of the problems facing the world today, the security of these ships extends far beyond simply the safe storage of liquefied natural gas to the threats posed by terrorists from around the globe.

It is unfortunate these responsible attempts to understand all of the consequences of an LNG terminal have been misunderstood and even distorted. For instance, it has been asserted that I favor removing any state and local input into the permitting process. Such allegations clearly demonstrate a lack of knowledge of existing law.

Under the Natural Gas Act, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is given full authority over LNG terminals by virtue of the Constitution's foreign commerce clause. This authority has been upheld in the federal courts.

However, because new challenges are anticipated, Nebraska Congressman Lee Terry introduced the Liquefied Natural Gas Import Terminal Development Act to strengthen FERC's authority. In doing so, his bill could weaken the right state and local entities currently enjoy to fully participate in the process (short of having veto power over a permit). While I believe one national standard should be maintained, I am opposed to the Terry bill because I feel it goes too far in limiting state and local input.

Since LNG was first proposed for Mobile County, I have sought to weigh a variety of factors to balance our economic interests against our safety concerns. Like most South Alabamians, I realize we can never have an ironclad guarantee that any industry will be totally safe or that accidents will never happen. That would be like expecting an automobile dealer to guarantee at the time of purchase your car will never be in a wreck or have a dead battery.

Likewise, I have tried to understand the imperative of our national energy crisis and how LNG — and LNG in Mobile — might factor into our long-range energy requirements.

As noted above, I have sought to address the concerns of my constituents by arranging meetings with FERC and the Coast Guard, and I have had several discussions personally on LNG safety with national experts on the subject. I sincerely regret that my deliberations on something this important have been misunderstood by some.

## ***I have concluded that uncertainties surrounding safety are such that I cannot support either of the two proposed on-shore facilities in Mobile County.***

Based on what I believe has been a painstaking review of LNG, I have concluded that uncertainties surrounding safety are such that I cannot support either of the two proposed on-shore facilities in Mobile County.

As I have said all along, a congressman — even if he wanted to — doesn't have the constitutional authority to stop these projects. But your congressman does have the ability to ensure the voices of the people who would be most directly impacted by these decisions are heard. The potential economic benefits should not take precedence over safety.

I truly hope that at some time in the future we can all have a greater degree of comfort with LNG and that it will be a more acceptable commodity in our energy portfolio. Our energy problems are real and LNG may well be a partial solution.

## ***Public, experts discuss new Medicare plan***

When Medicare was created in 1965, the idea was to guarantee our nation's senior citizens affordable medical care in the later years of their lives. Since then, few programs have become more popular with our nation's senior citizens than Medicare.

Recently, the 40-year-old Medicare program received a facelift of sorts with the addition of a new prescription drug benefit. Signed into law by President George W. Bush last December, the Medicare Act of 2003 is the first major step toward modernizing Medicare since its inception.

Even though all the new benefits of this law will not be fully implemented until 2006, there are already some portions in place that are providing immediate help to millions of Americans.

For instance, the new prescription drug cards, which became available on June 1, are providing significant "at the register" savings on the cost of medicine for many Americans.

These savings are a result of competition among drug manufacturers to provide consumers with the best prices possible. Recent studies indicate a reduction in the cost of both brand name and generic drugs at rates well over 10 percent.

However, even with all the stories written about this new program, many questions remain about how effective these changes really are.

Recently, I hosted two senior citizen seminars in Mobile and Fairhope, the focus of which was to provide more information on the new legislation and to answer as many questions as possible relating to the new provisions.

The interest generated by the new law was certainly evident in the attendance, as some 600 men and women took time out of their schedules to attend the meetings at the James P. Nix Center in Fairhope and the Mary Abbe Berg Center in Mobile.

I was especially pleased to have my friend and colleague from Georgia, Congressman Phil Gingrey, fly down to help lead these seminars.

Phil is uniquely qualified to talk about health care given that he is one of only a handful of congressmen who, prior to coming to Congress, was a practicing physician.

Another leading expert, Tim Trysla, with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services in Washington, provided specific information on the revisions to the program, with particular focus on the new prescription drug benefit and discount cards.

Even with these opportunities, many beneficiaries in South Alabama may still have some questions regarding the changes to the Medicare program, the new prescription drug benefit, and how they and their families can take advantage of the new provisions.

There are two resources available that can link interested individuals to the information they are seeking. The first

is the official website, [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), and the second is the toll-free hotline number, 1-800-MEDICARE.

As a result of the demand for more information, you may find the Medicare hotline busy on your first attempt. I would encourage you to try late in the evenings or on weekends, as these times apparently fall outside of the peak call periods.

When calling the Medicare hotline, it might be helpful to have certain information on hand to assist the operators in determining what card works best for you. In addition to having a list of the prescriptions you take on a monthly basis, it will also be helpful to have some basic financial information for your household and your zip code so that Medicare staff can determine which prescription drug cards are provided in your area.

The men and women answering the Medicare hotline are extremely knowledgeable and helpful and will be able to answer your questions and provide you with the prescription drug card options that will work best for you and your families.

I cannot stress enough that participation in the new aspects of the program is strictly voluntary; in fact, many Americans may be satisfied with their current insurance plans and may not wish to switch. But if you or someone you know wants to know what benefits the new Medicare program holds, help is just a phone call away.



*Congressman Phil Gingrey and I were greeted by the Dogwood Trail Maids when we arrived at the James P. Nix Center in Fairhope for our senior citizen seminar.*



# Ronald Wilson Reagan

## 1911-2004

On June 5, 2004, the United States lost one of its truly great leaders.

Ronald Wilson Reagan, our 40th president, passed away following a ten-year battle with Alzheimer's disease. His devoted wife, Nancy, and his three surviving children were at his bedside during his final hours.

In the week that followed, numerous events were held across the country to pay tribute to one of the most important leaders of the 20th century.

Over 100,000 people filed past his coffin at the Reagan Presidential Library in California, and over 104,000 people waited in line for up to eight hours to pay their last respects as the president's casket lay in state in the United States Capitol.

It was truly inspirational to watch these thousands of men, women, and children — many of whom were not even old enough to remember when President Reagan was in office — come from all parts of the world and from all walks of life to wait patiently for the opportunity to spend just a few moments viewing his flag-draped coffin in the Capitol rotunda.

I was deeply honored to represent the First Congressional District at the memorial service held in the Capitol on June 9 and later at the funeral service held at Washington National Cathedral. The week-long schedule of activities, culminating with a beautiful sunset ceremony on Friday, June 11, at the Reagan Library, were a fitting tribute to a man who made a tremendous difference in the life of this country and in many of the events that shaped the world as we now know it.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of President Reagan's achievements is the manner in which he was able to accomplish so much.

During his day, President Reagan was known as the "Great Communicator," a title that applied as much to his dealings with individual members of Congress as it did to his contact with the American people.

Perhaps no other president in modern times was as successful in achieving his objectives as was President Reagan, who never hesitated to personally call a congressman or senator to solicit his or her help with an important piece of legislation. In recent weeks, we have heard numerous first-hand accounts from Republicans and Democrats alike that were able to put partisanship aside and work with President Reagan for the good of the entire country.

There will most certainly be a spirited debate in the years to come over Ronald Reagan's place in history and his ranking among our great presidents. However, there is no denying that many of the events during his two terms in office — the passage of the largest tax cut at that point in history, his aggressive response to the actions of terrorists around the globe, and the actions he took that ultimately led to the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism — marked significant turning points in modern history.



*President Reagan's caisson traveled from the White House to the U.S. Capitol where the coffin was viewed by over 104,000 people.*



*Members of Congress had the opportunity to greet those waiting in line and provided bottled water to many as relief from the heat.*



*Miriam and Roland Neeson of Fairhope, new residents of the First District, were among the thousands who came to pay their respect to President Reagan.*

# Local shipyard finalist for major defense contract

As this nation moves further into the 21st century, one of the important challenges we will continue to face will be the issue of national security.

Unlike past centuries, the enemies of today do not always wear uniforms or operate in the open, and they have the capability of moving much more quickly and erratically.

As such, it is important that we stay as prepared as possible to defend the United States and its interests at home and abroad. To do that, we must not only properly train our military but also provide them with the best and most up-to-date equipment for them to carry out their mission.

In May 2004, the Department of Defense took steps to ensure that the Navy has the latest in fast-operating vessels when it announced the awarding of two design and prototype construction projects for the new littoral combat ship (LCS).

Austal USA, an Australian-based shipbuilding firm with a large operation in Mobile, was awarded one of the two contracts and will be working in conjunction with General Dynamics to complete this project. This is a significant accomplishment for South Alabama and will give us a voice in the future design of these ships and could potentially lay the groundwork for considerable economic growth in the future.

Both Austal and Atlantic Marine were among the three finalists for the project, and Atlantic Marine should be extremely proud of the work its engineers and design team did on a concept ranked as one of the three best in the nation.

I look forward with much anticipation to the work our area shipbuilders perform in years to come and to watching as South Alabama strives to be in the forefront of the shipbuilding industry.



*Littoral Combat Ship*

# 1165th Returns from Iraq

In mid-July of this year, one of Alabama's National Guard units received a hero's welcome when they returned from a long deployment in Iraq.

The deployment of the 1165th Military Police Company, which included a 90-day extension, proved to be one of the longest combat deployments since World War II. The men and women from this unit performed exemplary service under some very difficult circumstances and have gained the admiration and respect of other guard and reserve units and their active duty counterparts.

Many of the family members and friends of the 1165th traveled to Fort Benning, Georgia, for a joyous and emotional welcome-home ceremony. The following week, the unit received a tremendous welcome back in South Alabama as the men and women from the unit rejoined their families and started to readjust to civilian life.

I am extremely proud of the contributions all of our area service members made in the war on terrorism. I hope each of you continues to keep them, their families, and the families of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in your thoughts and prayers.

# National contest encourages local young artists

Each year, members of Congress from throughout the country are afforded an opportunity to sponsor *An Artistic Discovery*, the annual Congressional High School Art Competition, which was created in 1982 by the Congressional Arts Caucus to recognize and encourage the creative talents of young people from across the nation.

This art competition provides interested high school students an opportunity to enter a local contest from which a Best of Show entry is chosen. Once again, my office was honored to participate in this year's contest by hosting a local competition open to students in all 67 high schools located throughout Alabama's First Congressional District.

This year's local competition and awards ceremony was sponsored by the Mobile Museum of Art. The new museum, located near Langan Park in Mobile, provided a perfect setting to showcase the abundance of local talent from South Alabama. Other local sponsors included SouthTrust Bank, Mobile Gas, Ashland Gallery, and Springhill Dental Health Center.

Since the establishment of this competition, over 650,000 high school students have participated nationwide. This year we had over 50 entries from Alabama's First Congressional District alone!

Each district's winning entry is sent to Washington, D.C. to collectively produce a remarkable exhibit that is on display in the halls of Congress for an entire year. In addition, each district winner is eligible for a \$15,000 scholarship to Savannah College of Art and Design and is also invited to a special ribbon cutting ceremony in Washington, D.C.

This year's winner in the **Best of Show** category is Wilson Rushing from Baker High School for his entry, "Wilson Cubed." Other winners from this year's show are as follows:

**Second Place:** Zach Tapscott, Theodore High School

**Third Place:** Catherine Thames, St. Paul's School

**Honorable Mentions:** Kimberly Chilson, Monroe County High;

James Wenzel, St. Paul's School; Lucas McFalls, St. Paul's School;

Heather Patterson, Davidson High School; Jessica Elmore, St. Paul's School

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the Mobile Museum of Art and the other local sponsors, as well as each teacher and student who participated to make this year's show such a great success. We are already looking forward to next year's competition! For more information on our art contest, please contact Landra Day in my Mobile office at (251) 690-2811.



*Wilson Rushing stands beside his artwork "Wilson Cubed" as it hangs in the corridor of the U.S. Capitol.*

# Homepage enjoys major makeover; easier to use

One of the keys to being a successful representative in Washington is to be as accessible as humanly possible to the constituents back home in the district.

During the past twenty months, my staff and I have worked overtime to come up with as many different ways as possible to make this, your congressional office, even more available.

From opening our new office in Baldwin County last year, to launching a monthly electronic newsletter — the first of its kind in the Alabama Delegation — we are always on the lookout for new ways to keep the people of South Alabama informed of the current events in your nation's capital.

Along those lines, regular visitors to our website will notice a recent facelift to our homepage. Many of these changes, you should know, are in direct response to suggestions and constructive comments you have made over the past 20 months. Naturally, all of these updates are intended to make our homepage even more user-friendly and to provide a wider range of services for you.

While many of the options located on our previous web page are still there, a number of new features have been added, including a "hot topics" section that will be updated periodically with important news, links to reports and white papers, and informal on-line polls on major issues of the day.

In addition to these changes, the address for our web page has changed to <http://bonner.house.gov>.

Next time you are "surfing the net," take a few minutes to visit the new and updated site of Alabama's First Congressional District. Please remember that whenever we can be of service, we are just a click away.



# Washington and District interns gain valuable insight into the workings of a congressional office



*Left: District interns Jamie Shamp and Trevor Culpepper.*



*Left: DC interns Laura Urquhart, Jessica Fuller, and Clint Shoupe pose with me on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.*



*Right: District interns Brittney Ingalls, Randy Reed, and Christine Walsh.*



## Still the best staff on the Hill

During the past several months, I have been privileged to welcome several new staff members (pictured below) to my offices in Washington, D.C., Mobile, and Baldwin County. I have always been very blessed to have a talented team of men and women working with me, and these new staffers have been a great addition. The First District should be proud of the work they are doing on your behalf, and I hope you won't hesitate to contact them whenever you need assistance.

### Washington Office:

Alan Spencer - Chief of Staff  
Nancy Tippins - Legislative Director  
Kelle Strickland - Legislative Assistant  
Watson Donald - Legislative Assistant  
Matt Rhodes - Press Secretary  
Marcy Pack - Executive Assistant/Washington Scheduler  
Errical Pouncy - Director of Constituent Services

### Mobile and Baldwin County Offices:

Eliska Morgan - Deputy Chief of Staff/District Director  
Kay Williams - Senior Caseworker  
Jill Zurfluh - District Scheduler/Office Manager  
Landra Day - Constituent Services Rep./Grants Coordinator  
Frazier Payne - Field Rep. for Mobile, Clarke, and Washington Counties  
Jon Hand - Field Rep. for Baldwin, Escambia, and Monroe Counties  
Courtney Soward - Constituent Services Representative  
Brooks Morgan - Constituent Services Representative



*Left: Brooks Morgan*



*Left: Jill Zurfluh*



*Left: Courtney Soward*



*Left: Watson Donald*

## How to CONTACT Us...

### DC Office:

315 Cannon HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-4931  
Fax: (202) 225-0562

### Mobile Office:

1141 Montlamar Drive  
Suite 3010  
Mobile, AL 36609  
Phone: (251) 690-2811  
Fax: (251) 342-0404  
Toll Free: 1-800-288-8721

### Baldwin County Office:

1302 N. McKenzie St.  
Foley, AL 36535  
Phone: (251) 943-2073  
Fax: (251) 943-2093

Web site: <http://bonner.house.gov>

## Helpful numbers and links

**U.S. Capitol Switchboard** - (202) 224-3121

### **Congressman Jo Bonner**

Mobile Office - (251) 690-2811 or 1-800-288-8721  
Baldwin County Office - (251) 943-2073  
Washington Office - (202) 225-4931

### **Senator Jeff Sessions**

Mobile Office - (251) 414-3083  
Washington Office - (202) 224-4124

### **Senator Richard Shelby**

Mobile Office - (251) 694-4164  
Washington Office - (202) 224-5744

### **The White House**

Main Operator - (202) 456-1414  
Comments Line - (202) 456-1111

### **Alabama Legislative Delegation Office**

Mobile County - (251) 208-5480  
Baldwin County - (251) 937-0240

### **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services**

Information - 1-800-375-5283  
Forms line - 1-800-870-3676

**Cancer Information Service**- 1-800-4CANCER

**AIDS Hotline** - 1-800-342-AIDS

**FIGHT (Families in Grief Hold Together)** - (251) 990-8644

**Consumer Product Safety Commission** - 1-800-638-2772

**Department of Veterans Affairs** - 1-800-827-1000

**Federal Information Center** - 1-800-346-3364

**IRS Taxpayer Assistance** - 1-800-829-1040

TTD for Hearing Impaired - 1-800-829-4059

**Medicare** - 1-800-292-8855

**Medicare Prescription Drug Hotline** - 1-800-MEDICARE (633-4227)

**Passport Services (New Orleans)** - (504) 412-2600

**Secret Service** - (251) 441-5851

**Social Security Hotline** - 1-800-SSA-1213

TTD for Hearing Impaired - 1-800-325-0778

**State Department Travel Advisory & Visa Information**

Citizen Emergency Center - (202) 647-5225

**To Report Illegal Drug Smuggling** - 1-800-BE-ALERT

**To Report Toxic Chemical & Oil Spills** - 1-800-424-8802

Need to locate information about a federal agency? Try this helpful link that lists all the federal agencies:

<http://www.infoctr.edu/fwl/fedweb.exec.htm#feddept>.

Get the latest on federal legislation: [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov).

Get the latest news on events taking place in Alabama at [www.al.com](http://www.al.com).